

FIRST TORAH: The first half of the book of Sh'mot saw the birth of AM YISRAEL, the Nation of Israel. It saw the oppression and slavery in Egypt and the many miracles that were part of the Exodus. It saw our transition from the 49th level of impurity to the people who stood united and holy at Har Sinai. We got the Torah.

The second half of Sh'mot was Mikdash/Mishkan in full and glorious detail - twice - the special place Shabbat has among us, and one really bad example of false worship that nearly got us wiped out.

And we are now poised at the entrance to Torat Kohanim, the book of Vayikra, in which we learn - in great detail - of the service of the Mikdash.

And here's the problem. The Mishkan was officially set up and ready to go on Rosh Chodesh Nissan 2449. Not subtracting for periods of time between Mishkan and Mishkan, Mikdash and Mikdash, we have a period of less than 1400 years during which Vayikra was HALACHA L'MAASEH, part of the practical guide to Jewish Law and Practice.

Since Churban Bayit Sheini, we have had 1950 years during which much of Vayikra has been relegated to the theoretical.

In the last almost two thousand years (sounds more impressive than 2000), we have continued to study the topic of Korbanot, to include in our prayers many reminders and corresponding passages, to identify with the shul as Mikdash Me'at, to pay a tremendous amount of lip service to the concept of the rebuilding of the Beit haMikdash. Speaking of lip service - the term was used on purpose -

we can understand it in at least two ways:

Dictionary definition: an avowal of advocacy, adherence, or allegiance expressed in words but not backed by deeds...

Or, based on Hoshei'a 14:3 - UNSHALMA FARIM S'FATEINU, that our lips - here meaning sincere prayer - substitute for the bulls (and other sacrifices).

Any way you look at things, the fact of the matter is that the Jewish people speak and think of Korbanot as something from the past, something that is anachronistic.

Keep in mind that we cannot here do justice to this whole topic. Think of this Lead Tidbit as an editorial or op-ed.

Oh, yes, one more point before the punchline. It seems from Tanach, that our track record during the not quite 1400 year of Temple service, of korbanot - is far less than impressive. How many times did G-d, via how many prophets, tell us in how many ways, to keep our hollow and pointless korbanot and to be good people - as if these are mutually exclusive alternatives.

One might think that we are past korbanot, that we have succeeded in ways of service of G-d over the time we've been dealing with the absence of a Beit HaMikdash, that we should leave all of Mikdash in the past and in our hearts.

NOT SO! Making a Mikdash for G-d (so that He will dwell among us), doing all of the AVODA, personal and communal are Mitzvot of the Torah for all times. We



need to pray for the restoration of the Beit HaMikdash and its Avoda, we need to learn about korbanot as we do about other aspects of practical halacha. And - we have to do our HISHTADLUS in any or all areas that we are permitted, so that we will be ready - psychologically and actually for the building of the Beit HaMikdash, **בנ"א**

SECOND TORAH: ZACHOR - hear the public reading of Parshat Zachor and remember what Amalek did to us on our way out of Egypt.

This positive mitzva is paired with the prohibition not to forget what Amalek did.

There is a third mitzva of TIMCHEH, wiping out the remnant of Amalek from under the heavens.

How these mitzvot are to be fulfilled, what must we remember, are women also commanded on ZACHOR... and many other questions need to be answered, but not here.

For this Lead Tidbit we will focus on two things:

First, an interesting point to share with a boy (or girl) who recently (since last Purim) reached the age of mitzvot.

Second, a significant and very meaningful aspect of the mitzva as put forth by one of the commentaries of counting mitzvot.

I'll say, Dear Shoham (my grandson who reached the age of mitzvot a few months ago - you substitute your own recent Bar Mitzva),
Although the Torah does not specify

how often we need to remember what Amalek did, most sources seem to agree that the timing for remembering something (and not forgetting) is a year. This, of course, explains why Zachor is a yearly mitzva.

However, the Sefer HaChinuch seems to disagree on the timing. He writes, in the last paragraph of the mitzva of Zachor, that a person who NEVER heard or read Parshat Zachor EVER, is in violation of the mitzva of Zachor. It seems that the Chinuch says that once is enough to avoid the Torah violation. Therefore, this Shabbat, when you hear Parshat Zachor for your first time as a GADOL, you will be fulfilling a once-in-a-lifetime mitzva d'Oraita (according to the Chinuch). If you think about it, its kind of special.

Tizkeh L'Mitzvot, b'Simcha!

Final point for this second Lead Tidbit:

In addition to remembering what Amalek did to us, and in addition to remembering what other Amaleks throughout history have done to us -

Sefer Chareidim (written by Rabbi Elazar ben Moshe Azikri, a Tzfat kabbalist, poet, and writer, 1533-1600) says that when remembering the whole Amalek situation, we should also remember and reflect on what WE did that made us vulnerable to attack from Amalek.

Remembering what Amalek did and the other Amaleks we've encountered is meant to keep us aware and sharp and ready to fight, if necessary, to defend ourselves.

Remembering what made us vulnerable to Amalek has the additional potential to make us better people and better Jews.

Take a look in Parshat B'shalach, between the Splitting of the Sea and the Torah testifying to the belief that Israel had in G-d and in Moshe his servant - and between the last 9 p'sukim of VAYAVO AMALEK. Bitter complaints about lack of water, lack of food, and again lack of water - all of which indicates a lack of faith and trust in G-d - so soon after the episode at the Sea! Could that be what made us vulnerable to attack from Amalek? Could remembering that help make us better MAAMINIM and better Jews? And that too can protect us from Amalek.

Now look in Parshat Ki Teitzei, at the portion right before Zachor at the end of the sedra. Prohibition of possessing false weights and measures, in addition to the prohibition of using them to cheat others.

Can that kind of sinful behavior make us vulnerable to Amalek? Even a maybe here makes one think about it. Cheating in business is not only sinful, it very often leads to Chilul HaShem.

What did the Jews of the Persian kingdom do or not do to become victims of Haman's plot? Remember that Haman did not succeed, thank G-d. He was actually removed from the picture of things very early on - almost a year before his massacres were to take place.

But we were under the threat for that whole year (almost). What did we do to make us vulnerable to Haman's threats?

And what did we do right to be spared Haman's hoped-for end of the story?

We can ask this same question over and over again.

And even if we cannot figure everything out, the pondering and introspection is still beneficial to us.

ZACHOR is not really a once-a-year ritual; it is a constant part of Jewish Life.

